

Covenant Renewal
Joshua 8:30-35
Sunday evening, February 14, 2010.

I. The Command

Deuteronomy 27 forms the background of this event. Deuteronomy gives us the full statement of what was to take place. Joshua gives us here an abbreviated version of what was done at this time.

II. The timing of the event.

- A. Israel had to capture this part of the promised land before this event could take place in a somewhat peaceful and secure environment.
- B. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim are located about 18 miles North of Ai. The town of Shechem sat in the valley between these two mountains. The modern city of Nablous is located there now.
Nothing is recorded of Israel's journey North or the capture of Shechem.
- C. Great weight was added to this event by the Lord's dealings with His people since the time they crossed the Jordan. Both by way of blessing at Jericho and Ai, and also by way of judgment, because of the sin of Achan at Ai.
- D. This was the first reasonable opportunity Joshua had of making good on what they were commanded to do in Deuteronomy 27.

III. Covenant renewal.

Covenant renewal is what we do in the worship of God. In worship we express the worth of the Lord and His covenant, and we renew our bond to the Lord and His gracious covenant.

All the ingredients of covenant renewal / public worship are here.

- A. There is a covenantal setting as the people enter into the presence of God for the purpose of meeting with Him and renewing covenant with Him.
 - 1. Six tribes are lined up on the slopes of Mount Gerazim representing the blessings of God's covenant. Their names are given in Deuteronomy 27:12,13.
 - 2. The other six tribes are lined up on the slopes of Mount Ebal representing the curses of the covenant.
 - 3. Both are made to face each other and the priests, with the ark down in the valley, representing the Lord's presence in their midst. The promises made are to each other and to the Lord. We can never separate the Lord from His people. He is a covenant keeping God.

Application:

The setting of our worship is designed to follow this pattern. The Lord and His people are made to face each other. There is on the one hand the congregation, and on the other the Lord represented visibly in the furnishings of Pulpit, Table, and Baptismal Font.

These represent the ministry of God's word and the sacraments of the Lord's supper and baptism. Entering such a gathering is in a real sense a walking on holy ground, and a sense of that needs to possess us.

B. There is a dealing with sin by way of the altar.

No human hands or tools were to work on the stones of the altar:

1. Man could not contribute anything to the efficacy of this altar or its sacrifices.
2. In this way man was kept from polluting and profaning the Lord's altar, as did the nations around them.
3. The Lord Himself would provide all the efficacy of this altar.

Application:

This altar and sacrifice point us to the final sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the efficacy of His sacrifice and altar we contribute nothing.

4. The peace offerings of fellowship were brought to this altar as well.
 - Portions were burnt and given to the Lord.
 - Portions were given to the priests.
 - Portions were returned to the worshippers to eat in the Lord's presence.

Application:

It is still over the altar and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, represented by the elements of the Lord's table that we enter into communion with the Lord.

C. There is the ministry of the word.

1. The whole law was read in the hearing of the people, both the blessings and the curses.
2. Large stones were set up and plastered over. On these the law of God was written, perhaps in the form of the blessings and the curses.
3. It is to be noted especially here that all Israel attended this covenant renewal; It included the women and the little ones and even the strangers who dwelt among them. There was no children's church for the little ones. From a gathering this important and awesome no one should be excluded.

Application:

Today we have lost sight of what it is that we do in worship. The sense of awe and of wonder; of solemnness and seriousness; and the purpose of heart, have long been lost for too many. Two questions to consider:

1. How can children's church ever compare with what takes place in worship?
2. Why would we deprive our children of what takes place in worship?

D. There is consecration.

1. Those who stood on the slopes of Mount Gerazim responded with "Amen," meaning, "let it be so" to the blessings read from God's word.
2. those on Mount Ebal similarly responded to the reading of the curses.
3. thus there was a heartfelt commitment on the part of the people, to the Lord, and to the provisions of the Lord's covenant.

Application:

We too may consecrate ourselves to the Lord, and present ourselves to Him in our worship. We do so by prayer, praise and offerings. In presenting ourselves thus to Him we too embrace His covenant blessings and curses should we forget Him.

E. There is communion.

For this I simply refer back to what already has been said under "B" above. Fellowship and communion with the Lord is always the goal and outcome for all those who with humility and sincerity enter into this activity.